**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE**

**TOWN OF WEST NEWBURY**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**January 19, 2023 at 7:30 PM**

**Meeting Called to Order**

Wendy Reed, Chair called the public meeting of the West Newbury Community Preservation Committee (CPC) to order on January 19, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.

**Members in attendance**

Wendy Reed, Bob Janes, Brad Buschur, Gary Bill, Ray Cook, and CPC Administrator, Barbara Gard. Patricia Reeser, Angus Jennings and Judith Mizner were absent.

1. **Presentation of Funding Application Sawmill Brook Land Purchase**

Vanessa Johnson-Hall discussed the Open Space and Essex County Greenbelt, joint Funding Application to the CPC. She presented the benefits to the Town in purchasing the 32-acre parcel known as Sawmill Brook. Greenbelt has the property under Agreement with approximately a year to close. An earlier development proposal for this parcel is for two large “estate” homes with rights to develop Poor House Lane according to a 1985 agreement with the Town for two house lots and an improvement to the road (not paved, only gravel). The site is significant as open space, connecting to existing trails on several land parcels adjacent to the site; is an important core habitat with existing wetlands protection as well as potential for further safeguarding endangered species as shown on the State’s new Biomap. Essex County Greenbelt will hold a new Conservation Restriction on this property, which will be separate from the existing restriction on Mill Pond. She recommends that the Town own the parcel, using funding from Greenbelt (private fundraising - using “matching funds” requests, based on the allotment from West Newbury of the $350,000 CPA funds). She said there are two grant applications which could work, but that they would ask the state to prioritize the LAND (Local acquisition for Natural Diversity) grant application over a Greenbelt grant application, which they would also submit for a different grant. The total purchase price of the property is $705,000.

For details on the exact budget breakdown, see the CPC Funding Application – Sawmill Brook Conservation Acquisition. With the total Transaction costs of $14,350, the total project cost is $719,350. If the LAND grant of $394,800 is successful, only $210,000 would be required from CPA funding with Greenbelt’s private funding of $100,000. If the LAND grant is not awarded to the Town, CPA would fund $350,000 with Greenbelt private fundraising would be $180,000. Greenbelt would also apply for an EEA Conservation Partnership Grant for $175,000 and with Greenbelt funding the transaction costs of $14,350, again the total comes to $705,000.

There was a long discussion among Johnson-Hall, Bill and Buschur about the appraised value. Greenbelt uses LandVest as their appraiser who used two different ways of looking at land values. Inconclusive discussion about whether the CPC should hire a different appraiser to evaluate this property. Cook stated that the Planning Board is in support of this land purchase as did Buschur representing the Parks and Recreation Commission. Question arose as to how much money has been spent on land purchases since the inception of CPA in West Newbury compared to the other categories in the CPC budget, Housing, Historic Preservation, Open Space/Recreation. Reed stated that for Historic Preservation 2.1 million was spent; $555,000 was spent for Open Space, with almost nothing spent on Housing. Buschur further inquired about the Sawmill Brook property and wondered if there are CAD/Engineering plans of the property. Buschur moved to approve the Eligibility Application for this project; Cook seconded, unanimous vote to approve Eligibility. Buschur moved to approve the Joint Funding Application from Essex County Greenbelt and the Open Space Committee, Cook seconded. In favor, Reed, Buschur, Cook. Opposed, Janes and Bill. Open Space Committee will forward their vote showing they co-applied with Greenbelt to submit this Funding Application.

1. **Grant Agreement transferring funds from CPA to Housing Trust**

Reed stated that the Select Board is requesting the transfer of funds from the CPC Community Housing Account (current balance of $172,000) to the Affordable Housing Trust, and will request the 10% allotment going forward, requesting those funds to be transferred annually to go to the Affordable Housing Trust. The Trust is preparing the Grant Agreement (as suggested by Community Preservation.org) and will share it with the Committee when it is ready. A place holder will be prepared for upcoming spring Town meeting reflecting this request of transfer. Buschur asked if there will be reporting of how those funds will be spent. Reed said the Trust is working on an Action Plan which should be ready to review in March, and said that the Grant Agreement would address how the Housing Trust will do reporting. She expects that this type of Grant Agreement would be needed every year.

1. **Recreational Restrictions for CPC funds**

The Committee reviewed the Community Preservation Coalition’s outline of what kind of structures and accoutrements are allowed when using CPA funds for recreation. Reed noted that large built structures such as stadiums were prohibited, but park amenities, such as small, moveable bleachers are allowed. Other members agreed with this understanding of the guidelines.

1. **Whetstone Greenway**

Christine Wallace is the new DPW Program and Project manager and she will be taking over responsibility for this project; she will come up with a new estimate and that will be shared with the Committee as soon as she receives estimates from an engineering firm. Reed said that the original design of two separate boardwalks is being re-considered.

1. **Draft Annual Report**

Gard briefly discussed the CPC section of the Annual report. Reed made a minor change to the text regarding changes to the CPC By-law.

1. **Signs**

Gard said she reviewed the list of projects that have been completed, and came up with those that would be the best ones for sign placement. She will pick up the signs from The Sign Center in Haverhill, MA to make sure they are the sizes we ordered. Committee members stated that a sign for Brown Spring Farm, Page School Playground and Old Town Hall improvements. Reeser suggested Greenbelt properties that were purchased with CPA funds would be the best places for additional signs, such as: Artichoke River Reservation, River Road Conservation Area, The Atherton field and woods connector trail - two signs here one on either end of the trail since there were two different purchases and the newly acquired Coffin Street Conservation Area.

1. **Minutes**

Reed made a change in the Grant Agreement wording, stating that the draft from Community Preservation Coalition was only a suggested document; the Trust is working on a new Agreement. Janes moved to approve minutes of the prior meeting; Buschur seconded. All approved with Cook abstaining as he was absent from last meeting.

No Correspondence and Administrative Details.

Buschur moved to adjourn, Jane seconded.

Having completed the business before it, the Committee adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at approximately 9:00 p.m. The next meeting will be held in the first-floor meeting room at Town Offices on February 16, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Gard, CPC Administrator